

# Graham Nash: Teach Your Children

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/graham-nash-teach-your-children>

Recorded on November 16, 2013

**Wavy Gravy:** Wavy Gravy, Hippy Icon, Flower Geezer and Temple of Accumulated Error. Also clown, activist and buddy of our star for this evening, the leader of the Lords of One Throat. He is an environmental activist who has been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame twice and the Songwriter's Hall Of Fame twice. He is the author and an amazing human being, a fine specimen of a lad, Graham Nash. Bring him out here. Yehey!

[Applause]

**Wavy Gravy:** Do I give you this? [Laughter]

[Applause]

**Wavy Gravy:** Welcome, Graham.

**Graham Nash:** How's everybody?

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** You got Wavy Gravy to get off his ass and come and introduce me? That's fantastic.

**Greg Dalton:** I'm Greg Dalton from the Commonwealth Club of California. Our guest today is legendary singer-songwriter Graham Nash. As a member of the 1960s pop group the Hollies, Graham Nash was part of the British invasion that transformed American music.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** As a young musician in England, he played and partied with The Beatles, Rolling Stones and many other rising stars. In 1968, he left the Hollies to join David Crosby and Steven Stills in Crosby, Stills and Nash. He was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame as a member of the Hollies and Crosby, Stills and Nash. Graham Nash is the author of a new memoir, *Wild Tales: A Rock-And-Roll Life*.

Over the next hour, we'll talk with him about his life, music and political activism. Along the way, we will include live questions from our audience in San Francisco. Please welcome Graham Nash to the Commonwealth Club.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Good evening.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Graham, welcome.

**Graham Nash:** Thank you very much and thank you all for coming and sharing a little of your very precious time with us tonight.

**Greg Dalton:** You often end your concert with one of your famous songs Teach Your Children. And now that you're a grandfather, we thought we would mix it up tonight and begin with a gift for you.

**Graham Nash:** Oh. Oh, look at this.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** I can't wait to see what's going to go on here. Guitars too.

*San Francisco Community Music Center Children's Choir:*

*You who are on the road*

*Must have a code*

*That you can live by*

*And so,*

*Become yourself*

*Because the past*

*Is just a good-bye*

*Teach your children well,*

*Their father's health did slowly go by,*

*And feed them on your dreams*

*The one they picked,*

*The one you'll know by*

*Don't you ever ask them why,*

*If they told you, you would cry,*

*So just look at them and sigh*

*And know they love you.*

*And you, of tender years,*

*Can't know the fears*

*That your elders grew by.*

*And so,*

*Please, help them with your youth.*

*They seek the truth*

*Before they can die.*

*Teach your parents well,*

*Their children's health*

*Will slowly go by,*

*And feed them on your dreams*

*The one they picked,*

*The one you'll know by.*

*Don't you ever ask them why,*

*If they told you, you would cry,*

*so just look at them and sigh*

*And know they love you.*

**Graham Nash:** Very good.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Well done. Well done.

**Greg Dalton:** The San Francisco Community Music Center children's choir.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Well done, everybody. That was purely beautiful. Thank you. How fabulous.

**Greg Dalton:** The San Francisco Community Music Center Children's Choir.

**Graham Nash:** They sounded better than Crosby and Stills there for a second.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** You got room for them on your next tour?

**Graham Nash:** Not yet.

**Greg Dalton:** I'd like to begin with a story about you and school. And one day you skipped school to go buy tickets for Bill Haley. Tell us that story.

**Graham Nash:** It was just before my 15th birthday. Obviously, Bill Haley's Rock Around the Clock was part of the soundtrack of a movie called *Blackboard Jungle* that had just been shown in Manchester and was driving all the kids crazy. So we love the song Rock Around the Clock, and then one day we heard from the local newspaper that Bill Haley and the Comets were actually coming to Manchester.

And as Greg says, me and my friend, Allan Clarke, we were young kids just getting into music, just feeling our way through the universe and we knew that we would have to go see the show, right? So

I was the one that was chosen to stay off school and get tickets, right? So I'm standing in queue waiting to get tickets and I noticed that one of my teachers, Mr. Lewis -- whose name I will never forget -- passed by the queue in his car going somewhere.

Anyway, the next day, I go to school and I get called to the headmaster's office and that's never a good thing. It's never a good thing to be called to the headmaster's office and I had to admit to the fact that I was not sick as I told them I was that I was, in fact, buying tickets to the Bill Haley concert but it absolutely changed my life. Not only did the music throw me to death but also I learned something about school and I learned something about passion and I learned something about not being dissuaded from your passion. I learned a lot in that day. That was a very important day in my life.

**Greg Dalton:** It was part of that lesson the punishment you received for skipping school.

**Graham Nash:** Well, yes, because they have to make an example of you of every kid taking time off school buying concert tickets for a rock and roll show. So I was slippered. It wasn't pleasant. It was upsetting. I didn't think that I've done much wrong just taking a morning off school to buy tickets for a concert. I didn't kill anybody. It wasn't that bad to me but I guess it was to them. And ever since that day, I decided that school was actually not for me that I can learn much more in life than I could in school. I'm probably naïve and probably foolish but that's what I felt then.

**Greg Dalton:** Yet you still wrote a wonderful song called Teach Your Children Well, which is pays tribute to teachers. So you weren't a fan of school but you have a love for teachers.

**Graham Nash:** I'm not a great fan of school but I love facts and I love education. And yes, I wrote Teach Your Children and we have a lot to learn from our kids. We have a lot to teach them but we do have a lot to learn from our children. And to hear the song that I wrote, my goodness, 1968, 1969, sang by these wonderful children, that was a thrill and it was my honor to be introduced by my hero, Wavy Gravy. Thank you for being here.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** You should do a benefit here, Wavy. This is a beautiful hall here.

**Greg Dalton:** Think about it. Shortly after that Bill Haley concert, you left school and you started your music career with Allan Clarke who you've been friends with from six years old. Tell us about that musical relationship in those days.

**Graham Nash:** I'm not sure why Allan Clarke and I can sing so well together. I don't know. It wasn't anything that we were thought. It wasn't anything that we had lessons or teach or anything. It was completely natural to us. I met him when I was six years old. We started to sing in the assembly before classes. We would sing the Lord's Prayer and then we ended up singing in this beautiful harmony. I have no idea how or why. But I knew from a very early age in my life what I wanted to do. I wanted always to make music and I wanted to create music that made me feel like those early rock and roll records like the Bill Haley record, like the Everly Brothers. I'm a great lover of harmony and I've been doing this all my life. And I guess if I have been a plumber for 50 years, I'd be a great plumber too.

**Greg Dalton:** And you and Allan Clarke had a chance to meet the Everly Brothers. You staked outside of hotel. What was it like to meet them your heroes?

**Graham Nash:** It changed my life. The Everly Brothers on April 22, 1960 came to play in Manchester. And me and Clarke would sing their songs and we were too -- in 1960, I was 18. We

were two kids that just played around with acoustic guitars and love the Everly Brothers' stuff. And when they came to Manchester Rock, obviously, we're going to go and see the show.

But more than that, Allan and I decided that we would meet them and that entailed a couple of things. Where they were playing in Manchester was only about 100 yards from the best hotel in Manchester so we kind of figured that that's where they were staying and that was kind of driven home to us when the fact that there was no tour bus. So it wasn't like they were doing the show in Manchester then getting on the bus and driving to the next city. So we knew that they were in town.

So we waited, me and Allan, on the steps of the Midland Hotel until about 1:30 in the afternoon and they came around the corner. I think they were a little drunk. They've been to a nightclub after their show. Allan Clarke and I obviously missed the last bus home. We have a long way to walk home in the cold, north of England weather at 2:00 in the morning. But it changed my life in this way.

In many ways, I think that we're all trying to touch the flame. Anybody that we admire, any music that we like, any sculpture that we like, any painter, any musician, all that stuff, we want to touch -- we want to get as close to the flame as possible. And the feeling that I'm trying to explain to Greg, when we met the Everly Brothers, was there was only me and Allan Clarke, and Don and Phil Everly on the steps of the Midland Hotel at 2:00 in the morning, right?

And instead of like just patting us on the head and signing an autograph, they stood and talked to me and Allan Clarke for what seemed to be about a couple of weeks. It may have only been 10 minutes but they taught me something very interesting in there. I think when you meet your heroes, if you can look them in the eye and know that you have even a microsecond of contact, that's enough. We do want to touch the flame but we don't want to get burned.

So the Everly Brothers were incredibly important in my life. If we want to continue with these crazy Everly Brothers stories, we told them that night that we wanted to be in the business that we did acoustic songs like they did, and one day we would look to make records and stuffs, la-la-la-la, same old stuff that would, you know. But six years later, the Hollies would play a show at the London Palladium and it was a big deal. It was kind of like the Ed Sullivan Show here in America.

And after sound check, the phone rang backstage and our road manager, Rod Shields, picked up the phone and looked at me, and he said, "Yes, he's right here." And hands me the phone and I, of course, want to know who it is before I say hello. I mean he said, "It's Phil Everly." I said, "That's not nice. Come on. Why do that to me?" He said, "It's Phil Everly."

So he hands me the phone and I say, "Hello." And it's Phil Everly on the phone and he's in town with his brother Don, and they want to make a record in England, and did the Hollies have any songs that they haven't recorded? And we had a lot of songs we haven't recorded. So we go over to their hotel and they choose six to seven of them. We start recording with them the very next day and we had a couple of session men in there, John Paul Jones on bass of course and Elton John who was Reggie Dwight on piano and Jimmy Page on guitar. There was a lot of interesting musicians.

And then one more story. I'm in Toledo, Ohio in 1992 and we're playing this -- we normally get to a city the day before so we can acclimatize before we do the concert. My phone rings in the hotel, which is unusual, and I picked it up and it's Phil Everly. Apart from saying hello, I said, "Why are you calling me in Toledo, Ohio?" He said, "Well, you're playing in this certain place tomorrow but we're playing there tonight. Do you want to come to the show?" So, of course, I want to go to the show. I'm a stone fan to this day, still am.

So I get on the bus and we go down to the show. They do a little sound check where you go on the stage and you figure if your electric guitars are all plugged in and everything sounds good. And we're eating dinner after the sound check, and Don looks at me, and he goes, "So what are you going to sing with us?" I'm dying inside. It's been a life's dream, right? That's how I learned to sing the top harmony, right?

So I'm trying to be cool and I said, "Okay. I love 'So Sad', that's a beautiful song, why don't we sing 'So Sad'? It's pretty simple. We all know that, right?" So we rehearsed for about 30 seconds and Phil says to me, "Okay. I'll go underneath Don, you take my part." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because I have the top part. You can't possibly sing above mine." I said, "Phil, I'm Graham Nash. Did you forget who you called? You stay exactly where you are. I will sing on top of both of you."

Now you got to understand, I wanted to really -- I really wanted to pay them back for what they have given me what their music had done for me in my life. So I wanted to be good and I have a cassette of me singing "So Sad" three-part with the Everly Brothers that just two weeks ago when I spoke to Phil, he gave me permission to use it on the E, in the electronic version of the autobiography. And so you'll be able to get to hear me singing three-part with the Everly Brothers which was a dream to me, that's for sure.

**Greg Dalton:** Fabulous.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** So not long after you met the Everly Brothers on the steps of that hotel, there was a very rich music scene in Manchester. You saw The Beatles play. Tell us about seeing The Beatles, and then actually you were with them before they went into Abbey Road to make their first album.

**Graham Nash:** There was a Canadian promoter in England called Carroll Levis. And what he would do is like if he was working in San Francisco he'd get local talent and bring them up and they do that bit right. And then at the end of the show, he would come up and put his hand above everyone's head. And if the audience applauded loudest for some act then they won, right?

This is November 19, 1959. Me and Allan Clarke, who in '59 were 17 years old, we were part of that and obviously later, we started the Hollies. There was a guy called Freddie Garrity on the same show who was Freddie and the Dreamers. There was a man called Ron Wycherley who was kind of an English Elvis kind of knockoff called Billy Fury. And these four kids from Liverpool called Johnny and the Moondogs who later, of course, became The Beatles. But that was an interesting show. I wish I had a cassette of that night I'll tell you.

But yes, Liverpool is not that far from Manchester. It's only 30, 40 miles so there were a lot of incredible bands in the north of England, both in Liverpool and in Manchester. But once The Beatles had started to make records, they opened up a door. It used to be almost that there was like a ratio line just north of Birmingham in England, whereas if you were north bound north of that line, you were peasants. And if you spoke the Queen's English or the King's English, then you were gentrified. But when The Beatles started to become popular, everybody in the south of England wanted to talk with a Liverpool accent because they wanted to be hip and cool just like The Beatles, right?

So anyway, my point is that The Beatles opened this incredible door and a lot of groups went through it. There was a place that we used to play at together called The Cavern in Liverpool and they used to -- they had a very interesting business thing that they got going. Instead of all the local girls who worked in the local factories and worked in the local offices, instead of going to the pub or

to the fish & chips shop for dinner, The Cavern, they could go and see a new rock and roll show for an hour, and eat something like sandwiches.

So they had these shows on between 12:00 and 1:00 in the afternoon. The Hollies were playing one, one day and this guy comes up to us after the show and he said, "My name is Ron Richards and I'm a producer from Abbey Road in London and I think you're very cool. Obviously, we're up here because they can't only be The Beatles up in the north of England, there's got to be other bands that are interesting." So that's how we first started to make records. So we started the Hollies in December of 1962, and we were recording by April of 1963, and we haven't looked back since.

**Greg Dalton:** And you helped John Lennon the night before they went into record their first album with "Anna"?

**Graham Nash:** Yes. The Hollies were playing at the Oasis. The Beatles were playing in town. After the shows, we got together at a pub that sold drink afterhours, kind of illegal, but that's what it was. And they were going down to Abbey Road and stayed to record their album and John was upset because he didn't know the words to a particular song that he wanted to record the next day and I knew them. So I wrote the words out for John when they recorded a song called "Anna" the very next day.

**Greg Dalton:** Interesting. You write that the Hollies became very successful but you started to drift away from the Hollies and part of the reason was LSD. Tell us how that happened.

**Graham Nash:** Obviously, you've never taken acid.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** Don't be so sure.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** Well, I'm telling you, anybody that did would not have asked me what that was like. [Laughter] Yes. I'm not condoning anyone taking drugs but it was good for me. [Laughter] I've taken drugs in my life. Obviously, most of our life is well documented in the musical press. But taking LSD taught me something immediately and it was a very profound piece of knowledge and that was the -- it was a piece of lint on a bowl of mud spinning around in an incredibly huge ever-expanding universe.

And in those days, acid taught me that everything was completely meaningless that everything that we have done is all meaningless. I mean if every single one of us drop dead right now, the world would still go on spinning. The sun would come up tomorrow and everything would keep spinning and eventually another life form would come out. And I don't know what it would look like but maybe it wouldn't look like us.

My point is that if everything is meaningless then everything has to be completely meaningful. If this is life, as we know it, to me, if I'm okay and my wife is okay and my children are okay and my friends are okay, the rest is a joke. The rest is a joke to be played the best way that you can. You have very little control over a lot of your life. So the way that I deal with my life is that I find the most positive, the funnest way through all of it. It's a joke.

I wrote "Military Madness" about my father going off to World War II; have we learned nothing in the last 50 years? When Stephen Hawking was asked how long he thought that the human race might last. You know what he said? A thousand years maybe. I'm 71 years old. I've been around

for a certain percentage of that thousand years and I know how fast my life is going and I know that everybody here that is over 50 years trying to tell kids to take care of every second because the day after tomorrow you'll be 80.

You know what? It's very hard to tell children this but I'm telling you life goes incredibly fast so we must fill it with the best things we can because we have a choice. We can either fill it with the best things we can or we can fill it with the shitiest things we can. Your choice, right?

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** If you're just joining us, our guest today at the Commonwealth Club is singer-songwriter Graham Nash from Crosby, Stills and Nash, an author of a new memoir *Wild Tales: A Rock and Roll Life*. I'm Greg Dalton. So when you left the Hollies, you came to America and you opened your book talking about a cab ride up to a bungalow in Laurel Hills where you're about to see your girlfriend and you have a musical experience. So tell us about that.

**Graham Nash:** I had met Joni Mitchell several months before in Ottawa when the Hollies are playing in Ottawa. And needless to say, I felt completely in love with this woman, not only was she incredibly beautiful and still is, of course, but she's a genius. Joni Mitchell is one of our greatest musicians. No doubt about it.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** So we had a good time in Ottawa and she invited me to come and see her when I had some time off. So I flew from London to Los Angeles to be with Joni for a while and there were a couple of people at dinner at her house and it was Steven and David. And then after smoking a big one and having a nice dinner, David says to Steven, "Hey, play Willy that song that we've been working on." You see -

**Greg Dalton:** Willy is your nickname that they call you.

**Graham Nash:** Yes, I hope so. Yes. The Byrds had broken up, and David had been thrown out of the Byrds. And the Buffalo Springfield had broken up, and so David and Steven were trying to figure out something to do because they had this incredible musical energy. And so David says, "Play Willy that song we were just working on." And so they sang the song of Steven's called You Don't Have to Cry, which is on the first CSN record. It was a beautiful song, and I told Steven that that it was a wonderful song, and would they sing it again. And they sang it again, and they came to the end of it, and I said, "Okay. Do me a favor. Bear with me here. Just bear with me. Just do it one more time."

Now remember before we were talking about 50 years if I would have been a plumber how good I would be, I was good at water. I'm good at singing harmony because I've been doing that a long time in my life. I had in the first two performances of that song studied not only the lyrics and not only the melody but their body language, how they were standing, how they were breathing. Because as a harmony singer, you have to become who you're singing harmony with if you want it right. To me, that's the way I think about it.

So whatever sound Crosby, Stills and Nash has vocally was born in less than a minute. We didn't have to work for months, we didn't have to rehearse for a year, it happened immediately. So much so that about a minute into the song we have to stop and start laughing. I mean it was silly. I mean the Byrds and the Springfield and the Hollies were good harmony bands but this was completely different. We have never heard anything like the sound of our three voices together. Nobody has any claim on any of the notes or anybody saying, of course, but you can't sing like me and David and



Steven when we are on our game and it was incredibly great.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Well we are going to hear some of that sound and we're going to play Our House. But first, I'd like you to tell us the story of how -- what prompted you to write Our House?

**Graham Nash:** Well the census is to know that we're already at 1969. We have a long way to go. I was having breakfast with Joni at a delicatessen in The Valley in Los Angeles, Art's Deli. We finished breakfast. We were walking back to her car and we passed an antique store and we're looking in the window obviously and we're most curious. And Joni saw this vase that she wanted and she bought it. And we went back to her house in Laurel Canyon where we lived. We went through the front door. It was kind of a miserable morning as some Los Angeles mornings can be, a little drizzly, a little rainy, a little chilly. And I opened the front door and I said, "I'll tell you what, why don't I light a fire and why don't you put some flowers in that vase that you just bought today."

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** "I'm a musician, what do you think I'm going to do with that?" So Joni went out to put some flowers. She went to the garden to put some flowers and I set the piano. And I'm a musician and I don't like a vacuum. I don't like nothing happening. So because she was not the piano, I sat down at the piano and "Our House" was written probably in about an hour. Just an ordinary moment but I think we've all been there. I'll do something while you get the dinner going. We've all been at these ordinary moments and I personally love ordinary moments. I actually cherish them more than some other more insane moments of my life. Ordinary moments, that's where the secret is.

**Greg Dalton:** Well, let's hear our beautiful song written from an ordinary moment.

**Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young:**

*I'll light the fire,*

*You place the flowers in the vase that you bought today.*

*Staring at the fire,*

*For hours and hours*

*While I listen to you play your love songs all night long*

*For me,*

*Only for me.*

**Graham Nash:** Nice fade.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** "Our House" written by Graham Nash. But you write that Neil Young and Steven Stills were like two stags on stage. So talk to us how about the entry of Neil Young where you describe as a weird cat into the band.

**Graham Nash:** On that first Crosby, Stills and Nash record, Steven played most of the instruments.

Obviously, David and I played rhythm guitar on "Long Time Gone," "Lady of the Island," and those other songs but Steven played most of the instruments. He played lead guitar obviously. He played bass. He played piano. He played B3.

So when we finished the record and we realized that we're going to have to go out on the road and play live, how exactly do we do that, right, when Steven played most of these, right? So I think at some point Steven and Dallas Taylor, who was our drummer, went to England and asked people like Stevie Winwood and Jimmy Hendrix, actually strange, to join our band, right. But we needed somebody else.

Now Ahmet Ertegun, who is the CEO and owner of Atlantic Records and a true, true music man, had dinner one night with Steven and David suggested that they get Neil. And Steven was kind of upset of that because he just been through 20 months with Neil of insanity of Neil not turning up, of not doing TV shows, being difficult. And me, I have never met Neil Young, right? I knew who he was. I knew he was a great writer. I've heard "Expecting To Fly," and I thought it was a brilliant piece of record-making and songwriting, but I've never met Neil.

So I said, "Look, with all due respect, before we make this momentous decision to bring somebody else into what we consider to be a beautiful object of three-part harmony in this first record, I've got to meet this kid, right?" So I go to breakfast in New York City in the village with Neil. And after that breakfast, he was in the band. He was self-assured. He was very funny. He knew exactly what he wanted.

And I asked him at one point, I said, "So why am I talking to you about joining this band?" And he said, "You haven't heard me and Stills playing guitar man?" I said, "Well, not live." He said, "Well, that's why you need me in this band, man." Because what Steven and Neil had perfected in the Buffalo Springfield was these two lead guitar players in the same band and one of them would play something, and the other would play, "Okay, motherf\*cker, let me show you this." "Okay, you're doing that well. Okay, well, listen to this, man." And they had this intense, not rivalry, but a musical form of expression between themselves which is why I call them very often. I have stood in the middle many, many times. I've seen these two, as Greg said, stags on either side of the stage conversing with their guitars. It's quite something.

**Greg Dalton:** You went to Neil Young's ranch south of San Francisco and you had a musical experience. Tell us about that. You went into a lake and -

**Graham Nash:** I'm at his house one day and he says, "Hey, Willy, you want to hear my new record?" I said, "Yes, of course, I want to hear a new Neil Young record way." He says, "Come on." I said, "Great." I'm expecting to go to the studio with big speakers and stuff. So Neil says, "So get in the rowboat?" And I go, "What do you mean get in the rowboat?" He said, "Come on. I'm going to row out into the middle of the lake." He has a beautiful lake on his property.

When Neil Young said something, you got to react somewhat. So anyway, I get in the rowboat and we rowed to the middle of the lake. He has his entire house as the left speaker and his entire barn as the right speaker, and he played me Harvest full blast in the redwoods and it was an amazing experience. After the last note had faded away, Elliot Mazer, who was Neil's producer at the time that produced the album Harvest, came down to the edge of the lake and he shouted to me, he goes, "How was that, Neil?" And Neil Young shouted back, "More barn."

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** I'd like to hear from -

**Graham Nash:** But this sounds like a f\*cking fantasy. This sounds insane, doesn't it? I've never been want to look backwards because I don't care what happened two years ago. Let's get on with life, right? But in having to document my life from the very beginning, I got to the end of the manuscript that I've prepared, and I note down, and I swear to God, I said, "Oh my, I wish I was him." Because it sounded insane, which was my point of 40 seconds ago, me telling that story about Neil rowing me out into the middle of the lake. I mean come on. You couldn't even make this up, right?

**Greg Dalton:** Well, another wild tale is a sailing trip that you and David Crosby took from Florida to San Francisco.

**Graham Nash:** I got a call one morning from Crosby who says, "Hey, Willy, you want to go sailing?" "Okay. Why not? It's a beautiful Sunday morning. I think we're going to smoke a big one. We're going to go out on the ocean. We're going to watch a great sunset, smoke another one, have a beautiful dinner, have a great time, smoke another one, and go to bed. What's wrong with this picture, right? No, no, no, no, no."

Nine weeks, Fort Lauderdale to San Francisco. Yes, my life has been crazy. But I trusted David. I trusted him with my life because we were in many situations out there on the ocean that we could have lost our lives easily.

**Greg Dalton:** And he got lost himself. You write about his troubles and you and Jackson Browne trying to save him. Eventually, he did turn around.

**Graham Nash:** David Crosby only turned around when he wanted to turn around. No amount of us intervening with him, no amount of talking to him, no amount of taking more drugs than he did, no amount of not taking any drugs with him, nothing would deflect Crosby from his incredible spiral down into cocaine madness. Only when David Crosby walked barefoot into the FBI offices in Miami did I know that David have chosen life over death. That was the only time that I really knew because he made that choice. He wasn't forced into making that choice. He realized that his life was turning to complete shit and that he needed to do something about it.

And he ended up going to jail, as you know, and I was there when I got him out of jail with my friend Bill Siddons, who was our manager. I was actually playing in Houston that night on a solo tour and got Crosby out of jail, into a restaurant with the biggest steak that he can possibly think about eating because he'd been in jail in solitude confinement in Texas for a year. Think about that. Think about that solitude confinement for a year. Wow. Yes, that straightened Crosby's life right out. And as a matter of fact, even though it's very sad that he went to jail, it's possibly the reason that he's alive today.

**Greg Dalton:** And I saw you in concert recently and it's evident on stage that you two have a very special bond and rapport today on stage. You talked about you bonded with two people musically in your life, Allan Clarke and David Crosby.

**Graham Nash:** It's true but me and Crosby are like Laurel and Hardy, and I'm the thin one, by the way.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** I don't know what it is with me and Crosby. I don't want to know. Why would I possibly want to know what that was? It just happens, and I'm glad that it happens to this day, and I'm glad that it will happen tomorrow, if I'm still alive. I mean the truth is that we could drop dead

in the middle of this conversation. We don't know what's going to happen in the next millisecond.

So that's one of the reasons why I keep coming back to the fact that we need to utilize our time the best way we can.

Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, as rich as they are, can't buy a f\*cking second, not one. So time is our only currency. Time and our family and our friends and that's it. The rest, as I said before, to me, it's a joke and I'm loving playing this game, and having a fabulous time doing it, and it's a really fun joke.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** You spoke earlier about the Everly Brothers being heroes of yours. Who are some other heroes of yours? And I've heard you mention Cesar Chavez, but are there others? Who are your heroes?

**Graham Nash:** Well, I like people that get off their ass and do something. I like people like Wavy Gravy. I like people that -- with his Seva Foundation has saved the eyesight of over 100,000 children throughout the world.

**Female Participant:** Three million.

**Graham Nash:** Three million. Thank you.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Three million, really? And just one short story about Wavy, he called me in 1968 and he said, "I'm in Chicago and these hippies have been disrupting the Democratic National Convention. Would Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young come to Chicago just to sing to raise money for that defense fund?" I could go. David could go. Steven and Neil couldn't go. They wanted to go but couldn't because they have prior commitments." So my song Chicago was actually started by this man here. Thank you, Wavy.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** But there are many, many heroes, Rosa Parks, Jacques Cousteau. People like Clarence Jones who is here who was Martin Luther King's personal lawyer. I have a lot of -- Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu. I like kickass people that stand up for what they believe in and do something about it.

**Greg Dalton:** We have another one of your songs, "Immigration Man." Can you tell us how you came to write "Immigration Man"?

**Graham Nash:** I had been in Canada doing a show. At that point in my life, I was existing on what was called an H-1 Visa from the United Kingdom, I was not an American citizen at this point. This was the early 70s.

And coming back across the border, they let David through, they let Steven through, they let Neil through and they wouldn't let me through. I don't know why. Maybe something was wrong with my Visa, I don't care but it infuriated me. I didn't see why this spindle little guy with glasses, all of a sudden, had power over me but he did and he was exercising that power and it didn't make me feel good at all. I lived in San Francisco at the time on Buena Vista West here and came back to my living room and pounded out the "Immigration Man" on the piano. I think if there's anything to learn from any of this conversation is, don't piss me off.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** Let's see your "Immigration Man" by Graham Nash.

**Graham Nash:**

*There I was at the immigration scene*

*Shining and feeling clean.*

*Could it be a sin?*

*I got stopped by the immigration man.*

*He said he doesn't know if he can let me in.*

*Let me in, immigration man.*

*Can I cross the line and pray? I can stay another day.*

*Let me in, immigration man.*

*I won't toe your line today, I can't see it anyway.*

**Greg Dalton:** "Immigration Man" by Graham Nash.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Actually, recorded three blocks from here.

**Greg Dalton:** Fabulous.

**Graham Nash:** Yes, Wally Heider's in 1970. We spent a lot of time in the Bay Area. We love this area and this is a kickass place to live.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Another British rocker, John Lennon, had troubles with his immigration status. Did it ever being British ever cause you to think about being careful, being politically active in America when John Lennon had famously had troubles?

**Graham Nash:** No.

**Greg Dalton:** It didn't seem to come in?

**Graham Nash:** No, I don't care. I don't care. A lot of people say, "Talk to the FBI and get FIOS, the freedom of information. Find out if they got files on you." Why the f\*ck do I want to know whether they got files on me? What the hell can I do about it? Seriously, what can you do? There's no privacy anymore. Nobody's got any privacy here. We all know that. We all know what's been going on in the last 10 years with the NSA. We know it's going to get worse in the future. So the way I feel about it, I'm not doing anybody any harm. Anyone can know anything they want about me, I don't give a shit.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** You wrote a song about Bradley Manning. What is the song and why did you write that song about Bradley Manning?

**Graham Nash:** Because it was unfair. Constitutionally here in America, we're entitled to a speedy trial. A speedy trial in normal legal lingo is about 100 to 120 days, while all the lawyers get their stuff together for the trial, right? That's what you're entitled to. Bradley Manning, a U.S. soldier, a whistleblower, gave all the military and diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks, right? Kept into 12-foot by 8-foot white cell with bright lights 24 hours a day, often as to stand naked, being woken up every five minutes at night to see if he's okay for a thousand days before his trial.

It wasn't fair to me. I don't particularly care whether he's innocent or guilty of what he was charged with. That's not fair to keep somebody in such incredible conditions that the United Nations likened it to torture. This is America. We need people like Bradley Manning to tell us what's going on in our name.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Another area of your activism has been focused early with Jackson Browne on nuclear power and I think the nuclear power plant where you protested 20 years ago is not going to close in California. Many environmentalists have changed their too on nuclear powers through brand and others saying, "With climate change, maybe we should consider nuclear." Have you changed your views at all on nuclear power?

**Graham Nash:** Not a f\*cking shot. I don't understand why in California there's not solar panels on every single roof.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** We have sunshine what? Three-hundred days a year and it's all wasted while the oil companies can rob you, can treat you like sheep, can make sure that you shut up and buy another pair of snickers and another soft drink while they rob you. That's what's going on here. This is bread and circuses all over again. It's supposedly invented by the Romans but I'm sure it was going on for a thousand years before then you're supposed to give the populous something to eat and have them something to look at so that you can completely control them. That's what's going on here. That's what's going on right now. The corporations have taken over this entire planet. That's what's going on.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** And you live in Hawaii. Have you seen the impacts of climate change to think about it?

**Graham Nash:** When I lived in San Francisco, I used to see billboards. They were kind of funny but they weren't. And it said, "Shower with a friend, we're running out of water." I decided 40 years ago that if I was going to get married and have children that I wanted water to never be a problem in my life. And I found a place in Hawaii where our average rainfall is over 460 inches a year. The record 690 inches of rain.

I have seen in the last 30 odd years that I've been there an incredible decrease in the rain. Now I'm on an island that's 2,500 miles in the middle of the North Pacific, right? I'm on the most westerly coast of the most westerly island in this entire country and I'm seeing it happen. We just spent weeks and weeks in Europe and I deliberately asked everybody that was working there, all the people help us with speakers and moving guitars and amps and all that stuff. I said, "Tell me about

the weather. What's going on?"

And to a man and to a woman, they had no idea what was going on with their weather. They have never seen it like that. They have never seen it so cold. They have never seen it so hot. They have never seen it so rainy. It's happening. Global warming is a reality. All these f\*cking Koch Brothers that are paying scientists to tell you that it's not happening, they're doing you an incredible disservice. Most of the scientists on the entire planet know that something is going on and that we are probably contributing to it. By the way, I'm not always this depressed.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** I was talking at the show last night, I seem to vacillate between being completely enamored and in love and thankful to be alive to be in this mandate things that we can't possibly fix this. But I have to look at life through the eyes of my children and my beautiful granddaughter. I have to keep positive because the opposite is just awful.

I used to be an incredible watcher of Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow and Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert and NPR News and all the great places to get news but I was completely depressed all the time. And my wife, Susan, said, "Try something." I said, "What?" She said, "Don't watch." So I took two months and I didn't watch. And I came back, and I pulled right in, and they were talking about the same shit.

[Laughter]

Same stuff, bombs in Iran, bombs in Afghanistan, bombs in the bus, the Muslims are coming to kill us. It's bread and circuses, man. We are much more interested in the science of Kim Kardashian's ass than we are about Afghanistan. We are much more interested in Justin Bieber's monkey. It's so sad. Isn't it sad?

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Our guest today at the Commonwealth Club is Graham Nash, singer-songwriter from the Hollies and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. He's the author of a new memoir, "Wild Tales: A Rock & Roll Life." I'm Greg Dalton. We are going to go to audience questions. I invite you to join us with a very brief question or for Graham Nash. The line is going to be right here and you can start to form right there. We'll have about 14 minutes for questions for Graham Nash.

**Graham Nash:** Maybe nobody has a question.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** Sometimes it takes a minute for the -

**Graham Nash:** Step right up. You know what? I need to take that job.

**Greg Dalton:** We need to speak into the microphone. Thank you. It's right there. And if you can go through the back, that would help rather than cross this camera upfront. That would really -- okay, we got a -

**Graham Nash:** I love to see women crawling around.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** Okay. Yes, sir.

**Greg Dalton:** Let's go to audience questions for Graham Nash.

**Male Participant:** Graham, you made a comment late from your book that you said you're doing so many interesting things, you feel like an air traffic controller trying to juggle everything in. I appreciate that because I've been one for 35 years.

**Graham Nash:** I'm sure you love Ronald Reagan.

**Male Participant:** Yes, we're buds.

**Graham Nash:** Yes, I'm sure you are buds.

**Male Participant:** If you want to come down to San Francisco control tower on Monday, we'll plug you in and you can talk to some airplanes.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** You know what? Crosby would be much more interested in that position.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** No, no. You see, David is a pilot. He has a small plane. So David would be. Me, I don't know how those do. How do they do that? There's 600 people on an aluminum tube flying at 600 mile an hour and you're having a drink. Okay. How does that work? I don't want to know how any of that works.

**Male Participant:** I agree.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** I just know that it does. But thank you for your offer. But did you have a question?

**Male Participant:** Now that I'm getting towards the end of my career -

**Graham Nash:** Wow.

**Male Participant:** -- my wife, Sally, my friends Mike and Jill over here, we played music in our 20s, never got professional but now after the careers are aside, we've been playing for the last year and a half. We got a little five-piece band going. We played at a couple of parties. We played at a couple of open-mic nights. We got a song set of 30 whole songs.

**Greg Dalton:** And we have a long line behind you.

**Male Participant:** I know. Any words of wisdom or advice -

**Graham Nash:** No words of wisdom but if I have any advice for you, you just have to follow your heart. You know what's good. You know what's bad. Go the good way, right?

**Male Participant:** Yes, just wanted to hear you say it. Thank you so much.

**Graham Nash:** You're very welcome and congratulations.



[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Yes, sir.

**Male Participant:** Hi, Graham.

**Graham Nash:** Hi.

**Male Participant:** All right. My wife and I saw you at the Bridge School Show on Sunday and you guys were just terrific. I'm loving your new book. It's well written. It's a great story but I wanted to ask you, are you familiar with the book *Hotel California* by Barney Hoskyns?

**Graham Nash:** Of course.

**Male Participant:** Because it is about the true-life adventures of Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young et cetera, et cetera.

**Graham Nash:** It's amazing how all the people know how we are.

[Laughter]

**Male Participant:** So you were talking about the relationship between Steven Stills and Neil Young, and you remember his take on it. He really called it contentious and that Stills was an egomaniac and often fueled by cocaine, but he really calls it like kind of hostile and contentious. You were talking about it earlier not quite that negatively and I'm just wondering what your take is on his depiction of that relationship?

**Graham Nash:** Our life has been crazy. I never had brothers so I don't know what that brother thing is. So David and Steven and Neil are my brothers really and we argue a lot. We were arguing at the Bridge School. That was two weeks ago.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** It wasn't a bad argument which is about what song. I wanted to do a certain song. Neil wanted to do a certain song. We thrash it out but yes. Sure. Life is not like this perfect piece of cherry pie. It's just it's full of flies and it's got maggots in there sometimes. And we just have -- what can I say about what it is that we have done. A lot of people ask me, "Would you have made better music or more music had you been straight?" How do you answer that question?

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** How can you go back in time and not -- anyway, what was your question?

**Male Participant:** Well, thank you for -- that was -

[Laughter]

**Male Participant:** Well, I'm just saying that in Neil's book, he doesn't describe the relationship at all like that, it's really more long term.

**Graham Nash:** How interesting.

**Male Participant:** So I'm just wondering, what was the truth?

**Greg Dalton:** Thank you.

**Graham Nash:** Well, the truth is, with all due respect to Neil's book, it was kind of infuriating when he talks more about Peggy's dogs than he does about me and David.

[Laughter]

**Male Participant:** Thank you so much.

**Graham Nash:** You're welcome.

**Male Participant:** Hi, Graham.

**Graham Nash:** Hey.

**Male Participant:** You've also been a photographer and a photography collector and you've been involved in the photography printing business. I just wondered if you'd like to talk a little bit about that experience as well.

**Graham Nash:** I've been a photographer longer than I've been a musician. In my book, I had the first portrait of my mother is a portrait I took of her when I was 10. My father's main joy -- we were a very poor family in the north of England but his main joy was to take pictures. He bought a camera from a friend of his at work and he would take pictures of me and my sister at a local zoo. And then he would utilize one of -- we had four rooms in our house, a very small room so we would take one of the rooms and put my blanket up against the window to block out the light and he showed me the magic of photography and I've never forgotten that magic moment of seeing an image just appear out of nowhere.

He gave a blank piece of paper and he said, "You see, there's nothing on it, right?" And he put it into this liquid and waited and waited and waited. And 40 seconds later, this giraffe comes floating out into the universe but I know I saw my father take a picture of it. I was like, "I love that magic."

Joni had a very good experience at a gallery in Tokyo called the Parco Gallery with her paintings. And she said to me, "You should show your photographs," and I haven't shown anybody anything. My photography was purely for me. I didn't care if any -- nobody saw it, it was just for me. But she came to put pressure on it and so she said, "Send half a dozen pictures to this guy and see what he thinks."

So I sent this guy in Tokyo a half a dozen of my shots and he wrote back and he said, "I'd love to do a show." F\*ck, now I'm committed, right. So he wanted you to do an addition of 50. No problem. He wanted four-foot square. That was a problem. Who has a darkroom that big, right?

Anyway, about the time that I ever have any problems in my life, the answer is probably just right behind me and I turn around and there was the answer to my problem and it was called the IRIS graphics printer. And it was a printer that was used for the printing industry for the one shots that you see if you're standing in a line to go into a cinema and next week is coming and then there's a little picture. Those kinds of things. Or if you're in a car showroom and you want a brochure printed, you go right.

So anyway, the normal way that you would do that is you would have to shut down your printer, you'd have to clean it, you'd have to re-ink it and you'd have to work on a proof for your customer before he sends, "Okay, I love that. Make me two million of those." This guy from Bedford in Massachusetts said, "You're doing all wrong. This is the 80s. What you're supposed to do is you're

supposed to scan your customer's artwork in and tell my computer to tell the printer to just print it out. It will take you 40 minutes and cost you \$100 instead of three days and \$7,000 the old way." And so I wanted to see this machine that was supposedly making these great photographs, right?

This is what happened basically. The first two years of me shooting in America, which included my relationship with Joni and David and Steven in Woodstock, a friend of mine was doing a book on Joni. He knew that we live together. He knew that I probably taken some interesting photographs of her and instead of me having the discipline to take out the negatives that have Joni in them, I just gave him my negatives and I never saw them again. But I did have a box of proof sheets.

Now I don't know whether any photographers are out there but a proof sheet image is an inch and a quarter by an inch and an eighth, whatever it is. It's very small, twenty of them on a page and depending on how many in that roll of film that you bought. And this friend of mine, David Coons, who works at Disney, was listening to my story about how pissed off I was about losing all my images. And he looked at the proof sheets and he said, "Does any of these images that you like?" And I said, "Yes, I love this one of Crosby." He said, "Fine. Can I borrow the proof sheet?" No, I think I'm going to lose the proof sheets, right?

Anyway, about a week later, he comes back with a 20 by 30 image of David Crosby that knocked me on my ass. It was beautiful the blacks, the whites, the composition was beautiful, the paper it was printed on. And I said to David Coons, I said, "I didn't know you had a darkroom this big." He said, "It's not a photograph." And I said, "Well, I beg to differ but it is because I took it." He said, "No, no, no. This is an inkjet print." And I've never heard that term. This was '88. I've never heard that term. I said, "Are you kidding me? A machine made this print? Not a darkroom, not a photographer? Dug in and weave it and develop it or something." He goes, "No, it's a machine." I said, "Come on, you got to show me this machine."

So I go down to a printing company in Los Angeles, I see this machine. It is in fact printing beautiful photographs and it looks like a washing machine. It has a spinning drum. You attach the paper to it. There's four print heads that spray ink at the page. It turns and turns and turns. And then when it finally stopped, your image is ready. So that was the answer to my problem. That enabled me to print the show in Japan.

Now Crosby, Stills and Nash were going to a play in Australia and Mac Holbert, who is my dear friend who started Nash Editions with me, said, "We bought this machine. It was \$124,000 for this printing machine and we voided the warranty within the first 10 minutes." We had such a vision for this machine we knew that this could change the world. And so I started Nash Editions in 1989. We opened our doors in 1990. And my very first printer that I ever printed on is now living in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC.

**Male Participant:** Thank you.

[Applause]

**Male Participant:** Hey, Graham.

**Greg Dalton:** Let's have our next question for Graham Nash.

**Male Participant:** Thanks for taking my question. As most people here in this room, I grew up with CSN in our house. My mom and dad actually had the luck to see you guys at Woodstock. And 16 years later, I had the luck to see you guys at Live Aid, so which was kind of cool. So I was wondering if you had any great stories or memories about Live Aid and if you would like to share

those?

**Graham Nash:** I think that any time that we can get, hundreds of millions of people to all be on the same page at the same time, it's a good thing. When Live Aid went down, they were obviously concerts in London and in Philadelphia. There was a great camaraderie about it all. We knew that what Bob Geldof wanted to do in terms of feeding the children in Ethiopia was a good thing.

Now I know it's possible to critique it because you can say all that money you gave, it never really got to the people because the warlords took it before. I know all that stuff could have gone on. But the point is that his point was these kids are starving, we have to take care of them. So there was a great feeling of camaraderie. We did the show in Philadelphia. There was a great feeling of camaraderie, especially with the four of us because we haven't really sang and play together for maybe years before that. But yes, Live Aid was a really good event to be a part of because we thought we were making a difference in the world and possibly we did.

**Male Participant:** That was the one question that my mom and dad had, for me, was how good were you guys? So there's no Duran Duran, no nothing, they just wanted to know about you guys. So -

**Graham Nash:** Thank you.

**Male Participant:** But thank you very much. I appreciate it.

**Graham Nash:** Say hello.

**Male Participant:** Thank you.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Yes, ma'am.

**Female Participant:** Sorry, one second. This is an honor by the way. *Songs for Beginners* is one of my favorite albums of all time.

**Graham Nash:** How old are you?

**Female Participant:** I'm 23.

[Laughter]

**Female Participant:** And "Sleep Song" is one of my all-time favorite songs in the whole world. Oh, this is so crazy.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** Do I love being a musician?

[Laughter]

**Female Participant:** And I just wanted to know your inspiration behind the song.

**Graham Nash:** I'm a loud mouth.

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** I need to speak my mind. It's one of the reasons why I am so proud to be an American citizen for over the 35 years. I want to be a part of this country. I have a different view of this country than you do. I'm not from here. I see it differently than you do. This is an incredibly great country. This was based on principles that should go on for the next 100,000 years. It's being f\*cked up right now, and we all know why it's being f\*cked up.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** But this is a great country, don't you ever, ever forget how great these people are and how great this country really is.

**Female Participant:** Thank you.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** We have time for one last question.

**Male Participant:** Thank you for your art. Speaking of your background in the protest movement in the 60s and with all the trouble we have today with the environment and the government shutting down and the things you just mentioned, I wonder on what your perspective is on where is the anger, where is the people or the public of America, why aren't we rising up as some of the folks did in the 60s and 70s?

**Graham Nash:** Remember, before we're talking about Kim Kardashian and Justin Bieber?

**Male Participant:** Exactly.

**Graham Nash:** That's where the majority of people are.

**Male Participant:** They don't care?

**Graham Nash:** It's not that they don't care; they've been trained not to care. They have been trained to lie there. They have been trained by the media. You can figure out the people that own the world's media on two hands. Do you think that they really want protest songs on their airwaves? Do you really think they want people speaking out about real things on the TV? Not at all. They don't want any of that.

But let me tell you something. When CSNY did the last Living with War Tour with Neil, we knew what we had to say, particularly about George Bush, right? I've never been on the tour in my life where there were bomb-sniffing dogs. I was never on a tour where there are FBI agents all the time. I would never been on the CSNY tour where people walked out. About 10 percent of the people, every single night, walked out, especially in the south when we got to a song called "Let's Impeach the President".

[Laughter]

**Graham Nash:** They stood for three hours before that song came on the show, right? But they have a right to leave. They paid for that ticket. But holy shit, if you go and buy a ticket to a Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young concert, what do you expect?

[Laughter]

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Thank you.

**Greg Dalton:** I'm afraid we are out of time. We want to have an opportunity for you to get your books signed. So let's give one final thanks to Graham Nash.

[Applause]

**Graham Nash:** Thank you. Thanks, Greg.

**Greg Dalton:** Graham Nash, singer-songwriter of The Hollies; Crosby, Stills and Nash; and author of *Wild Tales: A Rock & Roll Life*. Thanks for coming to the Commonwealth Club.

**Graham Nash:** Thank you, Greg.

**Greg Dalton:** Thank you very much.

**Graham Nash:** You're very welcome.

**Greg Dalton:** Okay, thanks.

**Graham Nash:** Thank you, everybody.

[Applause]

[END]